



*His task was the most  
dangerous of all—but  
even that was not enough*

# DEATH TAKES WING



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# DEATH TAKES WING



TO MOST OUTSIDERS, AND TO SOME IN THE R.A.F., IT WAS A PILOT'S WAR.... BUT THE TRUE GLORY OFTEN LAY WITH SUCH BRAVE MEN AS THE REAR-GUNNERS. FOR ONE OR TWO LIKE BOB LUCAS, WITH AMBITION TO BECOME PILOTS THEMSELVES, ONLY THEIR FAILURE COULD CONVINCE THEM WHERE THEIR FINEST GIFTS LAY.

## Chapter I. TEAM OF DEATH

IN 1940, THE BRITISH ARMY WAS RETREATING FROM THE GERMAN ONSLAUGHT. THE SKIES WERE THICK WITH THE DREADED JU.87 STUKAS AND THEIR ESCORTING SQUADRONS OF FIGHTERS. THERE WAS SCARCELY A SINGLE BRITISH AIRCRAFT LEFT IN FRANCE.



HOLD YOUR FIRE, JACKSON! CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S ONE OF OURS? POOR BLIGHTER—HE'S GOT ENOUGH TO COPE WITH ALREADY, WITHOUT YOU PUMPING AT HIM FROM THE GROUND!

BLIMEY, SO IT IS, SARGE. E'S JUST ABOUT 'AD IT. LOOK AT THE BLINKING JERRIES SWARMING ROUND 'IM. —AND THERE'S ANOTHER. —'E'LL NEVER MAKE IT!

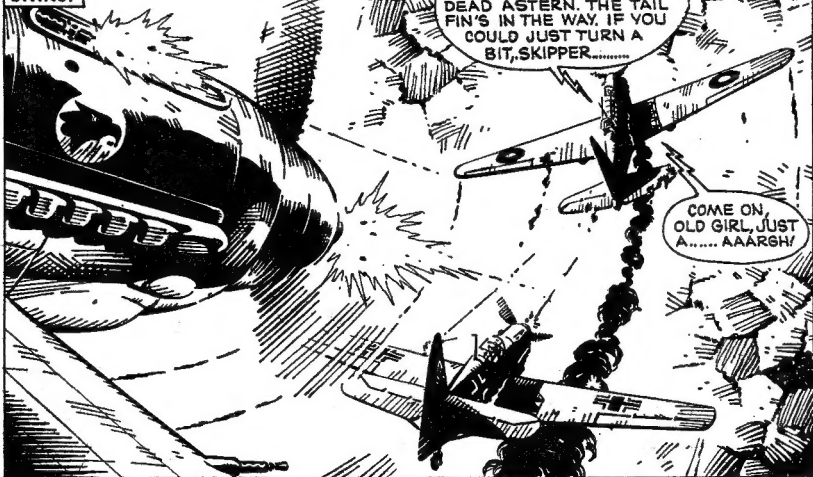
AMONG THE FAIREY "BATTLES" CASUALTIES HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY HEAVY. THEIR CRUISING SPEED WAS NEARLY AS SLOW AS THE FIGHTERS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR. THEIR ONLY DEFENCE WAS A SINGLE VICKERS GUN FIRING AFT.



MORE BANDITS RIGHT BEHIND US. GET GOING, SKIPPER, FOR HEAVENS SAKE!

CAN'T GET MUCH SPEED... ENGINE OVERHEATING NOW... GOT TO DIVE STEEPER. HOLD THEM OFF IF YOU CAN, REAR-GUNNER... THEY MIGHT LOSE US CLOSE TO THE DECK!

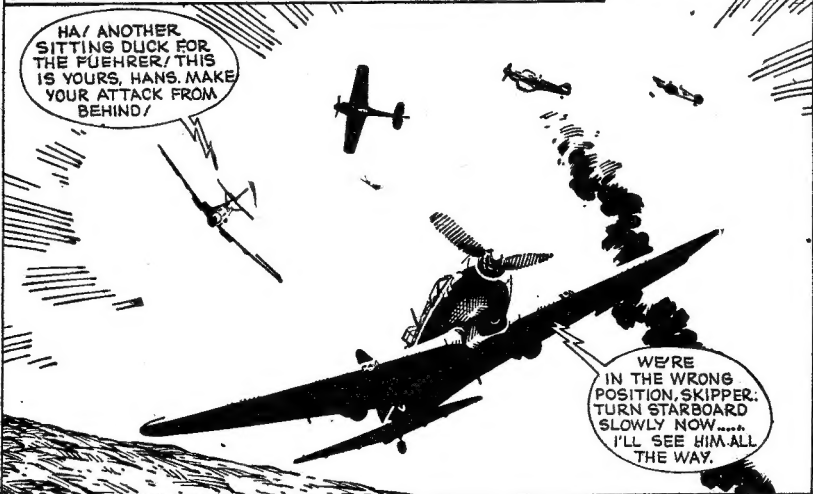
THERE WERE FEW CREWS WHO HAD WORKED OUT ANY SYSTEM FOR EVASIVE ACTION... MANY MADE THE MISTAKE OF DIVING.



I CAN'T SIGHT THEM. THEY'RE COMING UP ON US DEAD AFTERN. THE TAIL FIN'S IN THE WAY. IF YOU COULD JUST TURN A BIT, SKIPPER.....

COME ON, OLD GIRL, JUST A..... AAARGH!

BUT THE REAR-GUNNER IN THE FIRST "BATTLE" WAS LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN BOB LUCAS, SO FAR, HE AND HIS PILOT HAD SURVIVED THE DESPERATE STRUGGLE THROUGH WHAT SEEMED UNCANNY INTELLIGENCE!



HA/ ANOTHER SITTING DUCK FOR THE FUEHRER/ THIS IS YOURS, HANS. MAKE YOUR ATTACK FROM BEHIND!

WE'RE IN THE WRONG POSITION, SKIPPER. TURN STARBOARD SLOWLY NOW..... I'LL SEE HIM ALL THE WAY.

IN RECENT WEEKS THERE HAD GROWN UP A MARVELLOUS UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN LUCAS AND HIS PILOT.

SHE'S COMING ROUND NICELY NOW, SKIPPER. THEY HAVEN'T ALTERED THEIR LINE ASTERN. WE'RE FORCING AN ANGLE ON THEM. STAND BY FOR EVASIVE TURN STARBOARD!



SQUADRON-LEADER HARRY BERESFORD, D.F.C., LUCAS' PILOT, COMMANDED WHAT HAD BEEN A SQUADRON. HIS NERVES WERE STRAINED TO THE LIMIT. BUT HIS HAND AND HIS VOICE WERE STILL STEADY, THOUGH HE WAS SURROUNDED BY GERMAN FIGHTERS.

I CAN'T SEE ALL OF THEM— I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IT TO YOU, BOB. I'LL KEEP MY AIRSPEED AS SLOW AS POSSIBLE— THAT'LL FOX THEM!

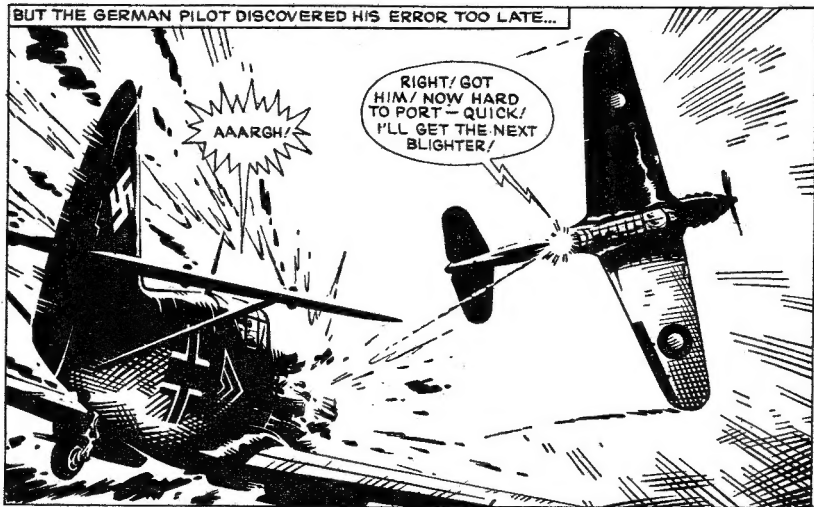
HIMMEL! HE IS SLIDING OUT OF MY SIGHTS!



BUT THE GERMAN PILOT DISCOVERED HIS ERROR TOO LATE...

AAARGH!

RIGHT! GOT HIM! NOW HARD TO PORT— QUICK! I'LL GET THE NEXT BLIGHTER!







UNABLE TO CHECK THEIR SPEED,  
THE NAZI HAWKS WERE DIVING  
PAST THE "BATTLE" TO THEIR  
OWN DESTRUCTION....

HIMMEL!  
I CAN'T —  
AAARGH!

.... AND THE INCREDIBLE HAD HAPPENED./

TWO WITH  
ONE BURST. I CAN'T  
BELIEVE IT!

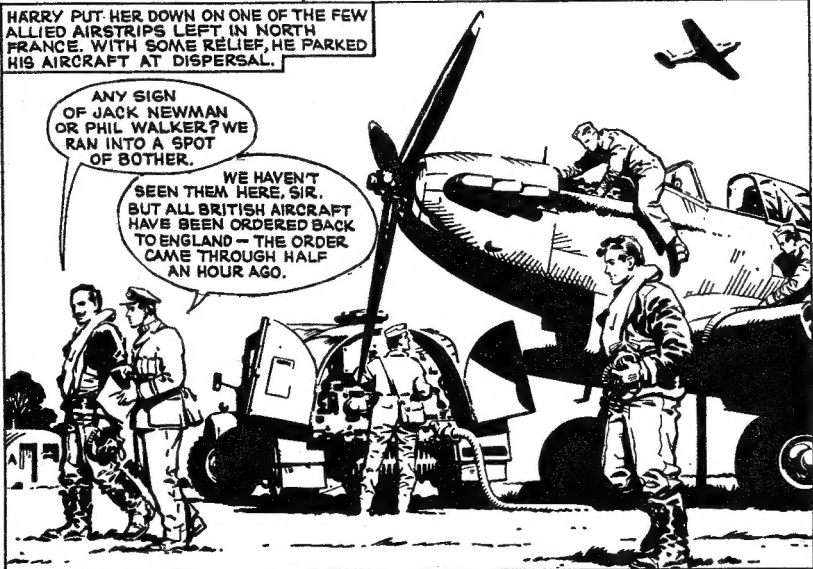
THE REST  
HAVE SCATTERED, SIR.  
THE OLD LAME DUCK  
HAS DONE IT AGAIN!



HARRY PUT HER DOWN ON ONE OF THE FEW ALLIED AIRSTRIPS LEFT IN NORTH FRANCE. WITH SOME RELIEF, HE PARKED HIS AIRCRAFT AT DISPERSAL.

ANY SIGN OF JACK NEWMAN OR PHIL WALKER? WE RAN INTO A SPOT OF BOTHER.

WE HAVEN'T SEEN THEM HERE, SIR. BUT ALL BRITISH AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN ORDERED BACK TO ENGLAND - THE ORDER CAME THROUGH HALF AN HOUR AGO.



THEY WERE ALMOST THE LAST CREW TO LEAVE FOR ENGLAND.

LOOK, BOB, WE MUST BUTTON UP THIS EVASIVE ACTION OF YOURS. I MUST GET THIS TO AS MANY "BATTLE" CREWS AS POSSIBLE... OTHERS, TOO, FOR THAT MATTER. YOUR SYSTEM CAN SAVE THEIR LIVES AS WELL AS MINE.



DURING THE NEXT FOUR MONTHS, THE FATE OF ENGLAND WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE FIGHTER PILOTS. IT WAS DECIDED NOT ONLY THROUGH COURAGE, BUT THROUGH SUPERB TEAMWORK.

WATCH OUT, JOHNNY — BANDIT CLOSING FROM 8 O'CLOCK HIGH — BREAK LEFT WHEN YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR BURST!

ROGER — I THINK I'VE GOT HIM — BREAKING NOW.

ACHTUNG SPITFIRE — AAARG!

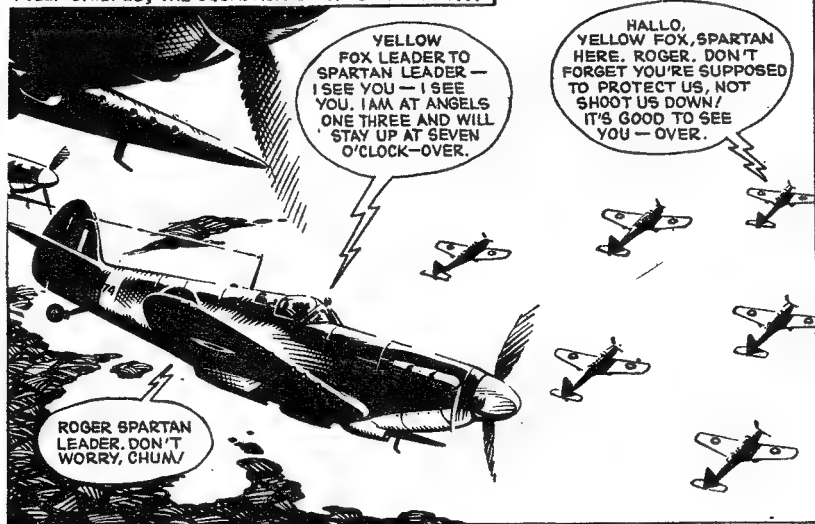
IT WAS TEAMWORK ALSO WHICH HARRY BERESFORD HAD INSTILLED INTO HIS NEW BOMBER SQUADRON OF WHICH LUCAS WAS HIS RIGHT-HAND MAN.

NOW CHAPS — A REMINDER — DON'T DIVE — FLY SLOW AND WAIT FOR YOUR GUNNERS' INSTRUCTIONS — AND WHEN YOU TURN, REALLY BASH THAT STICK OVER. WE'VE GOT TOP COVER THIS TIME — SPITS — SO DON'T SHOOT THEM DOWN/ SERGEANT LUCAS, HAVE A WORD WITH THE GUNNERS BEFORE WE TAKE OFF, WILL YOU?

RIGHT, SIR! ALL GUNNERS OVER HERE, PLEASE.

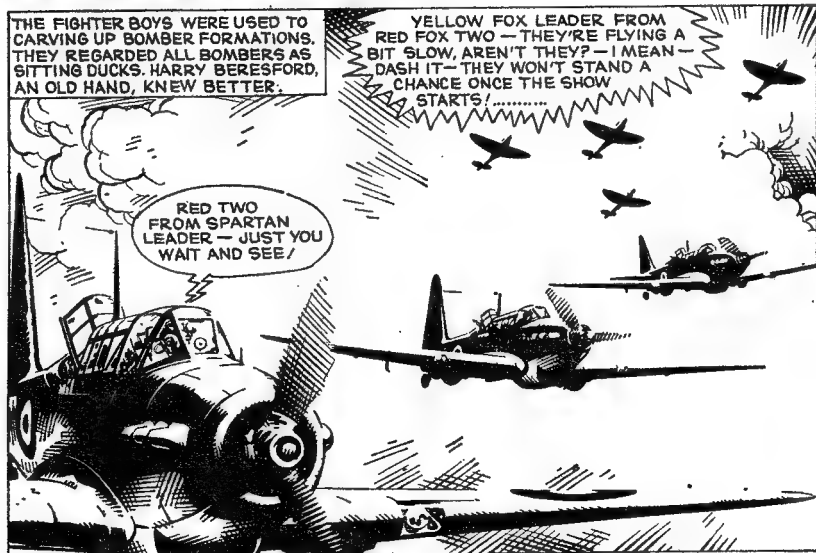


FULLY BRIEFED, THE SQUADRON TOOK TO THE AIR...



THE FIGHTER BOYS WERE USED TO CARVING UP BOMBER FORMATIONS. THEY REGARDED ALL BOMBERS AS SITTING DUCKS. HARRY BERESFORD, AN OLD HAND, KNEW BETTER.

YELLOW FOX LEADER FROM RED FOX TWO — THEY'RE FLYING A BIT SLOW, AREN'T THEY? — I MEAN — DASH IT — THEY WON'T STAND A CHANCE ONCE THE SHOW STARTS!.....



THE TARGET WAS A CONCENTRATION OF GERMAN ASSAULT BARGES STANDING BY FOR THE INVASION OF ENGLAND.

COME IN, SPARTAN BLUE SECTION. AIM FOR THE LARGEST SHIP — THAT'S THEIR AMMUNITION SHIP. OTHERS STRAFE TROOPS ON THE DOCKS WITH BOTH GUNS.

ROGER — BLUE LEADER COMING IN NOW!

ACCURACY WAS THE WATCHWORD OF BERESFORD'S "SPARTANS" — WITH BOMBS AS WELL AS GUNS

GOOD SHOW, BLUE LEADER / ALL SPARTAN AIRCRAFT REFORM NORTH OF THE HARBOUR AT ANGELS THREE — NOW

HALLO, YELLOW FOX / TIME WE WENT HOME. MY COURSE FOR BASE IS THREE TWO FIVE — OVER.

I CAN'T SEE YELLOW FOX ANYWHERE, SKIPPER

EXHILARATED BY WHAT THEY SAW HAPPENING TO ENEMY GROUND TARGETS — FOR A CHANGE — THE YELLOW FOX SPITFIRES HAD LEFT THE SKIES OPEN AND HAD JOINED IN THE STRAFING.

THIS SHOULD BE EASY. DIVE STRAIGHT FOR THE BOMBERS

SPARTAN LEADER — BANDITS AT NINE O'CLOCK ANGELS SEVEN — CLOSING!

BLAZES!! — FOXES CLIMB, CLIMB!!

BUT THE GERMANS HAD CHOSEN THE WRONG VICTIMS THAT DAY. THE GUNNERS THEY WERE FACING HAD BECOME CRACK SHOTS — LED BY A MAN OF SUPERB COOLNESS AND JUDGMENT.

WHAT A TARGET/ CLOSE UP HEINRICH/ WE MUST ANNILILATE THEM/

ALL SPARTAN AIRCRAFT LISTEN FOR EVASIVE TURN TO PORT. IT'S ALL YOURS, BOB/

TIMED TO A SPLIT SECOND, LUCAS RAPPED  
OUT THE ORDER OVER THE R.T. AND.....





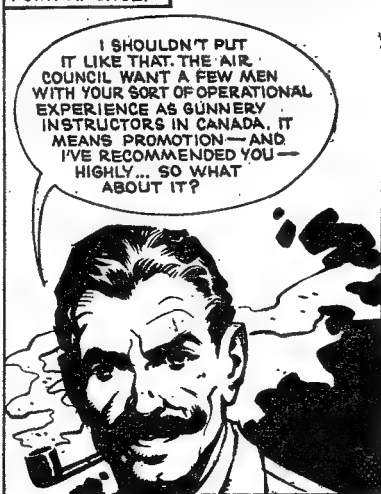
THE OPERATION HAD BEEN A TERRIFIC SUCCESS. BUT THE SPITFIRE PILOTS KNEW IN THEIR HEARTS THEY HAD LET THE SIDE DOWN, DESPITE HARRY BERESFORD'S KIND BUT FIRM WORDS ON PARTING.



A FEW DAYS LATER, LUCAS WAS SUMMONED TO HIS C.O.'S OFFICE. HARRY KNEW HOW TALENTED HIS GUNNER WAS... AND HE HEARD THAT VETERANS WERE NEEDED TO GIVE FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE TO NEW PILOTS TRAINING IN CANADA.



THE BURLY REGULAR SQUADRON COMMANDER, OWED HIS LIFE TO YOUNG LUCAS. SERVICE ETIQUETTE PREVENTED HIM FROM SAYING THIS — BUT HE COULD HELP IN HIS CAREER, AND HARRY CAME TO THE POINT AT ONCE.



LUCAS WAS RESPECTFUL BUT SHOWED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM, WHICH WAS JUST HOW HARRY HAD EXPECTED HE WOULD TAKE THE NEWS.

THANK YOU, SIR... THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR. BUT I DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE... WELL... NOT TO BE FLYING, SIR.

THIS ISN'T A DISGRACE, BOB! IT'S AN HONOUR — AND YOU DESERVE IT. THEY NEED CHAPS LIKE YOU OVER THERE... AND DON'T BE AFRAID OF SHOOTING A LINE!

THE SEA VOYAGE AND THE NEW SURROUNDINGS RESTORED LUCAS' FRAYED NERVES, BUT HE MISSED HIS OLD SQUADRON — ESPECIALLY WHEN THE SHIP WAS UNDER ATTACK.....

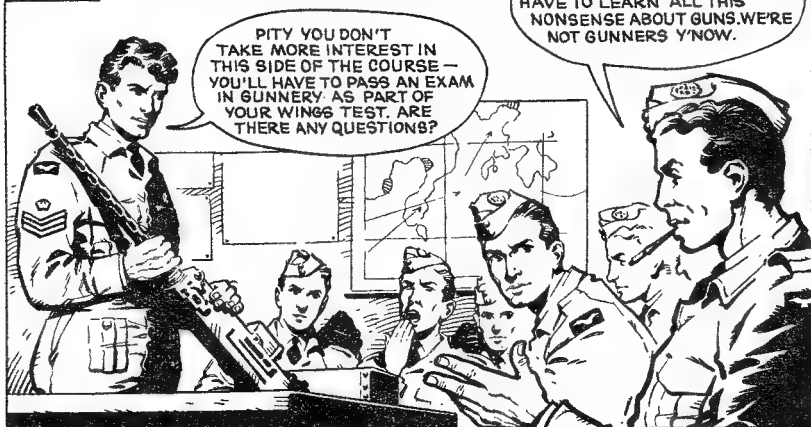
GLORY! I BET THE OLD SQUADRON'S JUST GETTING AIRBORNE RIGHT NOW — AND I'M STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN — LIKE GOING INTO EXILE. THIS IS. I ALMOST WISH I WAS IN THAT CONDOR!

'ERE, FLIGHT SERGEANT! DIDN'T YOU 'EAR THE ORDER? GET BELOW TYER MESS DECK — WE DON'T WANT NO SPECTATORS UP 'ERE!

LUCAS SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS AND WENT BELOW.

Chapter 2. **WASTED WINGS**

HIS JOB IN CANADA, WAS AS HE HAD FEARED, VERY MUCH ON THE GROUND. HE HAD TO LECTURE ON GUNNERY TO YOUNG PUPIL PILOTS, WHO FOUND HIS LECTURES BORING.



PITY YOU DON'T TAKE MORE INTEREST IN THIS SIDE OF THE COURSE — YOU'LL HAVE TO PASS AN EXAM IN GUNNERY. AS PART OF YOUR WINGS TEST. ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?

I SAY, FLIGHT, I WONDER IF YOU COULD TELL US MERE PILOTS WHY WE HAVE TO LEARN ALL THIS NONSENSE ABOUT GUNS. WE'RE NOT GUNNERS Y'NOW.

ALISTAIR CARRUTHERS, SON OF AN AIR VICE-MARSHAL, OPENLY DESPISED LUCAS. HIS COMBINED CONCEIT AND RUDENESS MADE THE OLD SWEAT LASH OUT AT ONCE.



'GET SOME OPERATIONAL TIME IN, CARRUTHERS. ANY MORE LIP FROM YOU, MY LAD, AND I'LL HAVE YOU ON A CHARGE!

FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, WRAP UP, ALISTAIR. NO POINT IN BEING RUDE, YOU KNOW.



IT'S TEAMWORK THAT MATTERS ON OPS. MY PILOT WAS THE SQUADRON COMMANDER. HE USED TO TAKE ORDERS FROM ME. THAT'S WHY WE ARE BOTH ALIVE TODAY.

EVEN IF CARRUTHERS TOOK NO NOTICE, MIKE MORTIMER, THE BEST PILOT OF THE SENIOR COURSE DID.....

FLIGHT, DID YOU REALLY MEAN WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT TEAMWORK? I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS THE PILOT WHO GAVE THE ORDERS.

YOU'RE THE FIRST PUPIL WHO HAS ASKED ME A SENSIBLE QUESTION. YOU SEE, IF AN ENEMY AIRCRAFT ATTACKS, IT IS THE GUNNER WHO DEFENDS HIS OWN AIRCRAFT. THE PILOT HAS TO MAKE HIS EVASIVE ACTION AS THE GUNNER TELLS HIM.

MIKE WAS FASCINATED AS HE LISTENED TO LUCAS' ACCOUNT OF THE STARK REALITIES OF COMBAT. HIS DESCRIPTION WAS VIVID AND CLEAR. MOREOVER, LUCAS HAD AN IDEA.....

SO THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE/ MUST DASH NOW — GOT TO CATCH A PLANE/ THANKS AWFULLY FOR EXPLAINING.

BY JOVE, HE'S WORTH TRAINING. REMINDS ME OF MY SKIPPER, TOO... SAW WHAT I MEANT IN A FLASH. I WONDER HOW I COULD PROVE WHAT I SAY IS TRUE.... IF I WERE A PILOT —

THAT EVENING, LUCAS SAT ALONE IN HIS ROOM, WRITING THE MOST IMPORTANT LETTER OF HIS LIFE.

I'M SURE I COULD FLY AS WELL AS SOME OF THE CADETS. SHOULD BE WAY AHEAD OF THEM IN FACT. OLD HARRY BERESFORD'S BOUND TO SEE THIS APPLICATION. HE SAID THE R.A.F. NEEDED MEN WITH EXPERIENCE... WELL, HERE GOES....

INSTRUCTORS  
QUARTERS

IT WAS THREE WEEKS BEFORE BERESFORD, NOW A GROUP CAPTAIN, WAS READING THE LETTER FROM CANADA. IT GLADDENED HIS HEART MORE THAN ANYTHING HAD SINCE HIS OLD GUNNER LEFT HIM.

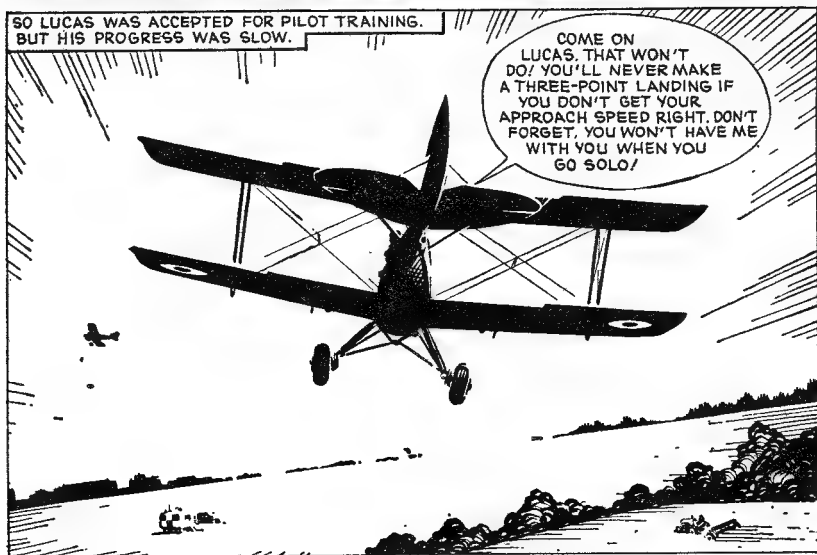
WELL I'M BLESSED, ADJ! WHAT A SPLENDID IDEA. MY OLD GUNNER WANTS TO REMUSTER FOR THE WINGS COURSE. I KNEW OLD BOB WOULDN'T WASTE MUCH TIME IN CANADA.

IF YOU'LL ADD YOUR RECOMMENDATION, SIR, I'LL SEND IT OFF TO AIR MINISTRY RIGHT AWAY. THAT'LL SPEED THINGS UP.



SO LUCAS WAS ACCEPTED FOR PILOT TRAINING. BUT HIS PROGRESS WAS SLOW.

COME ON LUCAS. THAT WON'T DO! YOU'LL NEVER MAKE A THREE-POINT LANDING IF YOU DON'T GET YOUR APPROACH SPEED RIGHT. DON'T FORGET. YOU WON'T HAVE ME WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO SOLO!



HE MANAGED TO PASS HIS ELEMENTARY TRAINING, BUT THE WHOLE OF HIS COURSE KNEW THAT HIS FLYING WAS MEDIOCRE. NOW, HE HAD TO COPE WITH A TWIN-ENGINE ANSON...

THESE INSTRUCTORS ARE BEING JOLLY DECENT. I WISH I HAD MORE CONFIDENCE ... ALL THESE INSTRUMENTS!

TIGER MOTH TO ANSON IS A BIG JUMP, EH? BUT—NOT TO WORRY. DON'T FORGET TO KEEP AN EYE ON THAT AIRSPEED. YOU CAN'T PULL AN ANSON OUT OF A SPIN, YOU KNOW!

ONE AFTERNOON HE NEARLY CAUSED AN ACCIDENT. THIS TIME, BY ATTENDING **TOO MUCH** TO HIS INSTRUMENTS AND NOT LOOKING WHERE HE WAS GOING.

WHEW! I NEVER SAW HIM!

SHALL I GET THAT 'PLANE'S NUMBER, SIR, THE ONE THAT CUT IN?

NO, SERGEANT, I KNOW WHO IT IS. I'LL DEAL WITH IT THROUGH THE INSTRUCTORS. GIVE THEM A RED.



LUCAS' FELLOW PUPILS WERE LESS TOLERANT THAN THE INSTRUCTORS —



WHAT THE BLAZES DID YOU CUT IN LIKE THAT FOR, LUCAS? D'YOU REALISE YOU COULD HAVE KILLED US BOTH?

YOU'RE FORGETTING, PETER, THAT FLIGHT-SERGEANT LUCAS IS A GUNNER. WE MUST BE TERRIBLY PATIENT AND CLEAR THE WHOLE BLINKING SKY WHEN HE'S FLYING. HOPE YOU GET SCRUBBED FOR THIS, LUCAS. IF I WAS C.O. I'D COURT-MARTIAL YOU!

LUCAS WAS BOILING WITH RAGE AND HUMILIATION, YET HE KNEW IT WAS HIS FAULT. FORTUNATELY, MIKE TOOK HIM ASIDE BEFORE HE HAD TIME TO EXPLODE...



HOLD IT, BOB. NO POINT IN MAKING A SCENE. EXCEPT YOU, NONE OF US KNOW WHAT WAR MEANS AND I MEAN TO LEARN FROM YOU!

THANKS MIKE, YOU'LL MAKE A PROPER SKIPPER, AND YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAN HELP ME.

PUPILS HAD TO DO A NUMBER OF TRIPS TOGETHER AS CO-PILOTS AND NAVIGATORS, AND MIKE AND LUCAS DECIDED TO TEAM UP FOR THIS.



THAT WAS A PRETTY SMOOTH TAKE OFF, MIKE. I NOTICED THAT YOU...

NEVER MIND THAT, BOB, I WANT YOU TO SHOW ME HOW TO CORKSCREW. WE'RE BOUND TO FIND SOME HARVARDS FROM NO.3 SCHOOL SOON, AND THEY CAN NEVER RESIST BEATING UP AN ANSON.

SOON MIKE SAW A HARVARD HEADING TOWARDS THEM AND LUCAS CLIMBED UP INTO THE ASTRO DOME. THESE GAMES WERE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN, BUT THAT DID NOT STOP YOUNG PILOTS HAVING A GO.

BANDIT FROM NO. 3 SCHOOL CLOSING UP PORT QUARTER, SKIPPER. STAND BY FOR CORKSCREW PORT.

BOY WHAT A SITTER! I'LL SHOW THESE BOMBER TYPES HOW I CAN GET ON THEIR TAIL AND STAY THERE!

MIKE'S RESPONSE WAS INSTANT. HE SLAMMED THE WHEEL OVER AND FORCED THE CONTROL COLUMN RIGHT FORWARD. LUCAS WAS JERKED OFF HIS FEET AND PRESSED HARD AGAINST THE WINDSCREEN.

CRUIKEY, WHERE THE?

THAT SHOULD SHAKE HIM, REAR-GUNNER / ROLLING OUT AND CLIMBING STARBOARD!

THAT WAS LOVELY, SKIPPER, JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED! ALTHOUGH YOU NEARLY SPLIT MY SKULL ON THE DOME!

MIKE WAS AMAZED AT HOW EASILY THEY HAD LOST THE HARVARD. NOW IT WAS HIS TURN TO HELP. THEY DROPPED DOWN LOW, WHERE MIKE COULD ACCUSTOM LUCAS' EYES TO EXACT HEIGHTS FROM THE GROUND.

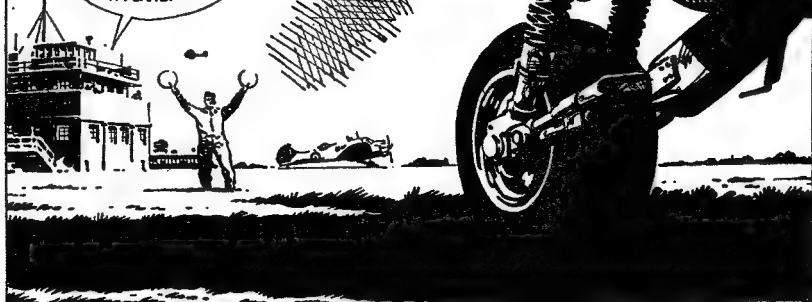
YOU CAN SEE THE GRASS CLEARLY NOW. THIS IS THE RIGHT HEIGHT AND SPEED FOR LANDING. WE'LL PULL UP OVER THOSE WIRES.

I'VE GOT HER. AND IF I PUT THE WHEELS DOWN NEXT TIME?

LUCAS HAD NOTICED HOW SAFELY MIKE HAD FLOWN. HE HAD LEARNT A GREAT DEAL, AND HE MADE A PERFECT THREE-POINT LANDING WHEN THEY RETURNED TO BASE. EVEN THE CONTROLLER WAS IMPRESSED — AND DECEIVED.

GOOD OLD BOB. I KNEW YOU WOULD DO IT. IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF PRACTICE AND CONFIDENCE.

THAT BOY MORTIMER CAN CERTAINLY HANDLE A PLANE!



VERY GOOD THE SENIOR COURSE FINISHED THEIR TRAINING. MIKE AND ALSTAIR CARRUTHERS WERE BOTH POSTED BACK TO ENGLAND.



DON'T THANK ME, BOB. YOU HAVE HELPED ME TO BECOME A BETTER CAPTAIN OF A CREW — AND THAT'S WHAT REALLY COUNTS, DOESN'T IT?

COME ON, PILOT OFFICER MORTIMER. FLIGHT-SERGEANT LUCAS WILL HAVE TO LET GO YOUR APRON STRINGS NOW.

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

IN SPITE OF CARRUTHERS' CAUSTIC COMMENTS, BOB LUCAS LATER MANAGED TO PASS ALL HIS TESTS AND STOOD SMARTLY ON PARADE TO RECEIVE HIS SECOND FLYING BADGE — WITH TWO WINGS THIS TIME.



VERY GOOD OF YOU INDEED TO COME OVER, SIR. YOU CAN'T HAVE MUCH TIME FOR THIS SORT OF THING ON SUCH A BRIEF VISIT FROM ENGLAND.

NOT AT ALL. YOU SEE, MY OLD GUNNER IS ON PARADE AND I'D LIKE TO GIVE HIM HIS WINGS MYSELF.

LUCAS WAS ASTOUNDED TO SEE HIS OLD SKIPPER.



GOOD SHOW, BOB! I'M DELIGHTED. GOOD LUCK WHEN YOU GET BACK TO ENGLAND. WE NEED CHAPS LIKE YOU. I OFTEN WISH I STILL HAD YOU WATCHING MY TAIL!

TH—THANK YOU, SIR. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED, SIR.

LUCAS' PATH TO THE SQUADRON WAS NOT AN EASY ONE. HE STILL LACKED CONFIDENCE, BUT CASUALTIES IN BOMBER COMMAND WERE CRIPPLING, AND REPLACEMENTS WERE DESPERATELY NEEDED.



BUT LUCAS HIMSELF WAS NERVOUS. HE HAD NOT RECKONED ON BEING PITCHED IN LIKE THIS. HE THOUGHT HE WAS PROOF AGAINST THE OLD FEAR.



THIS WAS THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL / FOR A MOMENT, LUCAS KIDDED HIMSELF IT MUST BE ANOTHER CARRUTHERS. THEN —

IS THAT YOU LUCAS?  
FOR GOD'S SAKE CLEAR THE  
CORRIDOR AND GET YOUR SHOWER  
OVER TO THE BRIEFING ROOM.  
COME ON / DOUBLE //

HELL AND  
DAMNATION!!.....  
OF ALL THE ROTTEN  
LUCK..... / IT'S  
HIM!



THOUGH THE MAD RUSH HELPED HIM, LUCAS BEGAN TO SHOW OUTWARD SIGNS OF NERVOUS STRAIN. HIS CREW NOTICED, AND WERE SURPRISED.

HERE, WHO'S  
THIS BLOKE, CARRUTHERS? ANY  
RELATION TO THE AIR MARSHAL WHO  
GAVE THAT TALK LAST WEEK ON THE FORCES  
PROGRAMME? SEEMS TO KNOW THE  
SKIPPER, TOO. DON'T THINK THE  
SKIPPER WENT MUCH  
ON HIM.

IF Y'ASK ME,  
THE SKIPPER'S SCARED.  
SURPRISIN'. 'IM SHOWING  
IT. SUPPOSE 'E 'AS BIN  
ON OPS, LIKE 'E  
TOLD US?





IT WAS DUSK AFTER THEY HAD TAKEN OFF AND HAD CLIMBED UP OVER THE ENGLISH COAST. BOB'S FLYING WAS JUMPY AND INACCURATE.

YOU'RE AT LEAST FIVE MILES NORTH OF TRACK, LUCAS. THE NAVIGATOR CAN'T FLY THE COURSE. HIMSELF, YOU KNOW— YOU'VE GOT TO FLY IT. YOU SHOULD HAVE LEARNT THESE BASIC THINGS IN CANADA.

SORRY, SIR. ALTERING COURSE 10 DEGREES STARBOARD, NAVIGATOR.

LUCAS FELT SICK WITH HUMILIATION. CARRUTHERS DEALT HIM THE FINAL BLOW AS THEY PLUNGED INTO THE DARKNESS OVER BELGIUM.

I THINK I'LL TAKE YOUR SEAT NOW FLIGHT-SERGEANT. I DON'T WANT THIS POOR OLD KITE TO GET HURT — I THINK SHE'S HAD RATHER A ROUGH RIDE SO FAR, DON'T YOU? AND I DON'T INTEND THIS TO BE MY LAST TRIP.

IF THAT'S AN ORDER, SIR I'LL HAND OVER.

CARRUTHERS BECAME MORE FRIENDLY ONCE HE WAS AT THE CONTROLS. MOREOVER, AS THEY APPROACHED THE TARGET, PERSONAL DISLIKES WERE FORGOTTEN AS THE MACHINE BUCKED AMONG THE DEADLY FLAK BURSTS.



THE HUGE LANCASTER WITH ITS TEN TONS OF BOMBS ABOARD, PITCHED VIOLENTLY FORWARD AND AN 88 MILLIMETRE SHELL HAD ALL BUT SEVERED THE TAIL UNIT. LUCAS PLUNGED BACK TO RESCUE THE REAR-GUNNER.



WHEN HE GOT BACK TO THE TANGLED WRECKAGE, LUCAS FELT STRANGELY CALM... HE WAS IN CHARGE — THERE!



## Death Takes Wing

WHEN THE WIRELESS OP. ARRIVED, LUCAS CLIMBED INTO THE TURRET. HE KNEW BETTER THAN ANYONE HOW VITAL THAT POSITION WAS. HE TESTED THE GUNS AND THE TURRET MECHANISM. THEY WORKED!

THE REAR-GUNNER'LL BE O.K., SKIPPER. I'M IN THE TURRET NOW. EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE SERVICEABLE STILL.

SKIPPER HERE. GOOD SHOW, LUCAS, THAT'S AMAZING LUCK. PERHAPS YOU'LL FEEL MORE AT HOME THERE, EH? I'VE SEEN A COUPLE OF OUR AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN IN THE LAST MINUTE, SO GET SEARCHING!

AT THAT VERY SECOND, THEIR OWN AIRCRAFT WAS BEING STALKED BY A JUNKERS 88. IT'S FOUR CANNON WERE POISED WITHIN RANGE.

NAVIGATOR HERE, KAPITAN. RANGE CLOSING TO 200 METRES. TARGET DEAD AHEAD. YOU SHOULD SEE HIM NOW.

BRAVO/  
I SEE HIM NOW,  
RIGHT IN MY....

THE GERMAN PILOT NEVER FINISHED HIS SENTENCE. LUCAS HAD SPOTTED THE JUNKERS 10 SECONDS BEFORE, AND HAD WAITED TILL HIS FOUR BROWNINGS COULD BLAST IT OUT OF THE FLAK-TORN SKY.

PITY YOU PICKED ON UNCLE BOB TONIGHT, SONNY.

BOY, THAT'S SOME SHOOTING! I NEVER EVEN SAW HIM!

THE B8 WAS LIKE A GREAT FLAME PLUNGING TO DESTRUCTION. BUT SUDDENLY, LUCAS' ORDERS CRACKLED THROUGH THE INTERCOM. BY THE LIGHT OF THE FLAMES, HE HAD SEEN A SECOND FIGHTER CURVING IN FOR ATTACK.

PREPARE TO CORKSCREW STARBOARD—AND KEEP YOUR MIKE SWITCHED OFF IN THE MID UPPER TURRET—CORKSCREW STARBOARD GO!!

DOWN STARBOARD!

LUCAS' BROWNING'S SPAT A CONE OF DEATH HALF DEFLECTION PORT. THE MID UPPER, TOO, SQUEEZED HIS TRIGGERS.

ROLL OUT AND CLIMB PORT, SKIPPER. MID UPPER OPEN FIRE. WE'LL GIVE HIM THE FULL TREATMENT!

GOOD SHOOTING, CHAPS!

ALISTAIR CARRUTHERS WAS IMPRESSED. AS THE STRICKEN LANCASTER LIMPED HOME, HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS LUCAS CHANGED FROM SCORN TO RESPECT.

SKIPPER HERE. WE'LL MAKE IT NOW, I THINK. THANKS TO YOU, LUCAS. YOU CERTAINLY PUT UP A GRAND SHOW — ALL THANKS TO YOU, CHUM!

THAT WAS DECENT OF ALISTAIR CARRUTHERS. HE'S HAD HIS PROOF, OF COURSE. BUT WHAT WILL HE SAY ABOUT MY FLYING?



ALISTAIR USED ALL HIS SKILL TO GET THEM BACK IN ONE PIECE. AT DE-BRIEFING, LUCAS HAD ANOTHER SURPRISE.....

THAT'S RIGHT—  
TWO CONFIRMED. BOTH  
FLAMERS—MAINLY DUE TO THE  
SECOND PILOT WE GOT THE  
GUNNER BACK SAFELY. LUCAS.  
WHAT'S YOUR GUNNER'S  
INITIALS... I SAY LUCAS...

CARELESS  
 TALK  
 COSTS  
 LIVES

GREAT HEAVENS!  
THERE'S MIKE!

MIKE RECOGNISED BOB  
INSTANTLY AND CAME  
OVER TO HIM.

FANCY YOU  
FLYING WITH ALISTAIR!  
I BELIEVE IT'S QUITE  
AN EXPERIENCE!

THANKS,  
MIKE, OLD MAN!  
YOU WEREN'T FLYING  
TONIGHT I SEE. WELL,  
I CERTAINLY NEVER  
HOPE TO FLY WITH  
A BETTER GUNNER  
THAN BOB LUCAS.

BUT DAMMIT!  
I'M SUPPOSED TO  
BE A PILOT —  
AREN'T I?



# Chapter 3. TO EACH HIS OWN

MEANWHILE, BOMBER COMMAND CONTINUED TO BE WORRIED BY HEAVY CASUALTIES AMONG THE NEW "PATHFINDER" SQUADRON. GROUP CAPTAIN HARRY BERESFORD, D.S.O., D.F.C. WAS ORDERED TO FORM A BRAND NEW SQUADRON OF THESE CRACK CREWS.



HARRY BERESFORD GIFTED THROUGH LISTS CAREFULLY. HE HAD TO RELY LARGELY ON SQUADRON RECOMMENDATIONS. THERE WERE SCARCELY ANY NAMES HE RECOGNISED — NEARLY ALL THE OLD CREWS HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN. THEN....



BACK AT 260 SQUADRON, TWO YOUNG PILOTS WERE DELIGHTED AT THEIR POSTING. THEY WERE TO FLY THEIR CREWS TO GRIMTHORPE, BERESFORD'S STATION.



THIS IS FANTASTIC LUCK, ALISTAIR! NOW OUR CHAPS WILL REALLY HAVE A CHANCE TO SHOW HOW GOOD THEY ARE.

BIT OF A CELEBRATION TONIGHT, EH, SKIPPER?

EARLY NEXT MORNING, MIKE AND HIS NAVIGATOR, FLYING OFFICER MARK RANDALL, WENT TO COLLECT THE REST OF THE CREW. AS HE APPROACHED THE HUT, MIKE SENSED THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG.



I SAY, MARK, WHERE'S ANDY? I CAN'T SEE HIM OR HIS MOTOR BIKE. GLORY, I HOPE HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING SILLY LAST NIGHT. CELEBRATIONS AND FAREWELLS AND ALL THAT!

THE SKIPPER'LL GO RAVING MAD WHEN WE TELL HIM.

MIKE'S WORST FEARS WERE REALISED. HIS REAR-GUNNER HAD SHAKEN HANDS WITH A CHURCHYARD WALL AT 35 M.P.H., AND WAS NOW IN IPSWICH HOSPITAL. CHALKY SANDERS, THE MID UPPER GUNNER, BROKE THE NEWS.



ANDY SHOULD'VE STAYED IN CAMP LIKE THE REST OF US, THE STUPID CLOT! WHAT DO WE DO NOW, SKIPPER?

GO AND FETCH BOB LUCAS!

THE CREW ADMIRERD THEIR SKIPPER, BUT THEY HAD NEVER SEEN HIM LOOK LIKE THIS BEFORE. THE WHEEL OF FATE HAD COME FULL CIRCLE. MARK WENT TO FETCH LUCAS.

HERE HE IS, SKIPPER, I GOT HIM HERE AS QUICKLY AS I COULD!

NOW LISTEN, BOB, ONCE MORE FATE HAS THROWN US TOGETHER. I'M POSTED TO PATHFINDER AND I'M TAKING YOU WITH ME!



WHAT THE BLAZES --!!

DON'T ARGUE! YOU'RE ONE OF THE BEST TAIL GUNNERS IN BOMBER COMMAND. YOU'RE SIMPLY WASTING YOUR TIME HERE!

AND WHO THE DEVIL ARE YOU TO TELL ME I'M WASTING MY TIME? ARE YOU GETTING BIG HEADED ALL OF A SUDDEN? YOU CAN'T EVEN CONTROL YOUR OWN STUPID GUNNERS...



DON'T WASTE YOUR WORDS, BOB, I REPEAT, YOU'RE THE BEST GUNNER IN BOMBER COMMAND, AND YOU'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND ABOUT ALL THIS WHEN YOU FIND OUT WHO OUR NEW C.O. AT PATHFINDERS IS.



LUCAS' REPUTATION AS A PILOT WAS FAR FROM BRILLIANT. BUT MIKE KNEW THAT THEIR GREATEST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL WAS TO HAVE HIM IN THE REAR TURRET.

MARK, GET THE CHAPS' LUGGAGE SEEN TO AND MEET US AT THE FLIGHTS IN HALF AN HOUR.

MIKE MUST BE MAD. HE'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH IT, AND YET— I WONDER—



MIKE'S CREW WERE SUSPICIOUS OF THEIR NEW MEMBER. AS THEY PUT ON THEIR FLYING KIT, WILLIAMS, THE WIRELESS OP, WAS SARCASTIC.

P'RAPS 'E'LL SIT UP FRONT WITH THE SKIPPER, ALL NICE AND COSY LIKE. 'E'S A PILOT, ISN'T 'E? DON'T FORGET, BOYS, IT'S A PILOT'S AIR FORCE!

BELT UP WILLIAMS, AND GET SOME SERVICE IN!



LUCAS HAD NO INTENTION OF SITTING UP FRONT BUT HE WAS STILL SMARTING FROM THE WIRELESS OPERATOR'S REMARK WHEN THEY GOT TO DISPERSAL.

BLIMEY / HERE'S LUCAS.

WOT'S 'E DOIN' IN THE REAR TURRET? 'E'S SUPPOSED TO BE A PILOT, AINT 'E?

MINUTES LATER, FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MIKE MORTIMER HAD 'F FOR FOX' RUSHING OVER LINCOLNSHIRE AT 6000 FEET. ALREADY BOB FELT HAPPIER.

IT'S A TREAT TO FLY HER WITH A LIGHT LOAD. HOW ABOUT SOME CORKSCREWS, BOB? JUST FOR OLD TIMES SAKE? I'LL WAGGLE MY WINGS AT THAT SPITFIRE.

O.K. SKIPPER. MIGHT WARM ME UP A BIT. I'M PERISHED WITH COLD BACK HERE.

IT WAS, INDEED, LIKE OLD TIMES.

BANG ON/ AN  
OPERATIONAL LANCASTER.  
THIS'LL BE FUN!

HE'S TURNING  
IN NOW. CORKSCREW  
PORT.. GO!

FOR THE REST OF THE CREW IT WAS AN EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE  
FIVE MINUTES. NONE OF THEM WAS PREPARED FOR THIS,  
AND LOOSE BAGGAGE WAS FLUNG AROUND AS THEY  
CLUNG DESPERATELY TO THE WILDLY PITCHING AIRCRAFT.

— ROLLING AND  
CHANGING. UP  
STARBOARD.

CRUIKEY —  
MIND THE FURNITURE.  
SKIPPER!

BUT FOR CHALKY, IN THE MID UPPER TURRET, IT WAS AN EYE-OPENER. HERE WAS PROOF INDEED THAT BOB LUCAS WAS NO AMATEUR.

O.K. SKIPPER,  
BREAK OFF THE ACTION,  
PERHAPS THAT'LL TEACH THE  
SPIT NOT TO COME IN  
TOO FAST!

THIS IS A REAL  
GEN-MAN. MAY-BE  
THE SKIPPER'S NOT SO  
CRAZY AFTER ALL.

AS MIKE LANDED AT GRIMTHORPE AND TAXIED TO DISPERSAL HE WAS GLAD HE HAD PROVED LUCAS' GENIUS TO HIS CREW ON THE WAY. AT DISPERSAL, THEY WERE MET BY HIS FLIGHT COMMANDER.

THANK YOU FOR  
MEETING US, SIR. YES,  
MY REAR-GUNNER IS A  
PILOT, BUT HE IS UNUSUAL  
IN OTHER WAYS, TOO. THAT'S  
WHY I'VE GOT HIM  
BEHIND ME.





SQUADRON-LEADER MARSHALL, D.F.C. MIKE'S NEW FLIGHT COMMANDER, TOOK MIKE AT ONCE TO THE GROUP CAPTAIN'S OFFICE WHERE MIKE DECIDED TO SPILL THE BEANS ABOUT BOB. HE BRACED HIMSELF FOR A STORMY INTERVIEW.

COME IN, MORTIMER. SQUADRON-LEADER MARSHALL TELLS ME YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL REAR-GUNNER. I DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS A PILOT. PERHAPS YOU'LL EXPLAIN?

I THINK I HAD BETTER TELL YOU THE WHOLE STORY, SIR. MY OWN GUNNER HAD AN ACCIDENT LAST NIGHT SO I HAD TO ACT QUICKLY.....

THE GROUP CAPTAIN LET MIKE HAVE HIS SAY. HE LIKED THIS YOUNG MAN, BUT HIS STORY SERIOUSLY DISTURBED HIM UNTIL —

—AND WHAT FINALLY MADE ME TAKE THE LAW INTO MY OWN HANDS, SIR, WAS THAT THIS MAN IS BOB LUCAS, YOUR OLD GUNNER.

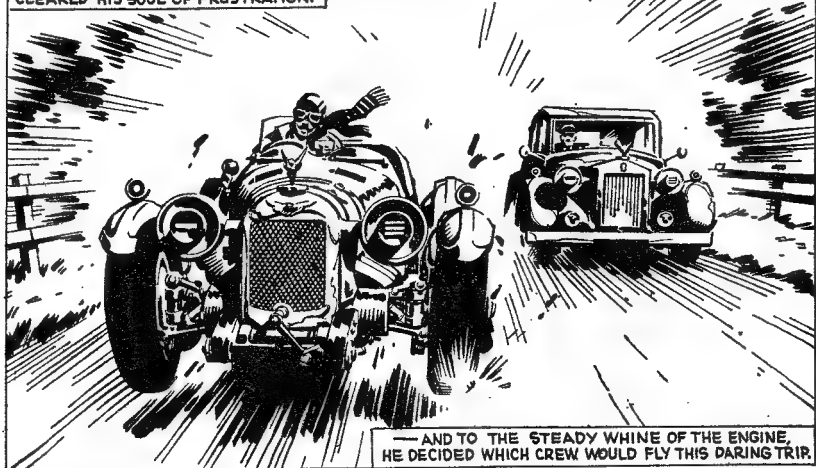
GREAT HEAVENS! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! I SUPPOSE YOU WANT ME TO CARRY THE CAN? WELL—I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO!

SO MIKE HAD COMPLETED A CRACK CREW. THREE WEEKS LATER, HARRY BERESFORD HAD A TOP SECRET INTERVIEW WITH A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPERT AT Bomber Command H.Q.

YOU SEE, GROUP CAPTAIN, THIS HUGE MOUND OF EARTH COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN MOVED BY THE ARMY OF SLAVE WORKERS FROM EASTERN P.O.W. CAMPS.

POOR DEVILS! AND LET ME TELL YOU, HARRY, THE PLACE IS SWARMING WITH FIGHTERS AND THEY HAVE NEW HIGH ALTITUDE SEARCHLIGHTS AND FLAK BATTERIES THERE, TOO.

HARRY BERESFORD HAD TRIED IN VAIN TO GET THE JOB OF FINAL RECONNAISSANCE FOR HIMSELF, BUT WAS TOLD HE WAS TOO VALUABLE. ON THE WAY BACK TO GRIMTHORPE, THE SPEED OF HIS 3½ LITRE CAR CLEARED HIS SOUL OF FRUSTRATION.



— AND TO THE STEADY WHINE OF THE ENGINE, HE DECIDED WHICH CREW WOULD FLY THIS DARING TRIP.

WHEN HE ARRIVED AT GRIMTHORPE HE AT ONCE SENT FOR FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT MORTIMER'S CREW.



I'VE GOT A VERY SPECIAL JOB FOR YOUR CREW TOMORROW NIGHT, MORTIMER, WHICH YOU'LL BE DOING BY YOURSELVES. IF YOUR MISSION IS SUCCESSFUL, YOU MAY EVEN SHORTEN THE WAR. I'LL HAND YOU OVER TO INTELLIGENCE.

WHY US?  
WE'RE NEW TO  
THIS GAME. HE MUST  
THINK A LOT OF  
MIKE.



## Chapter 4. HEROIC CREW

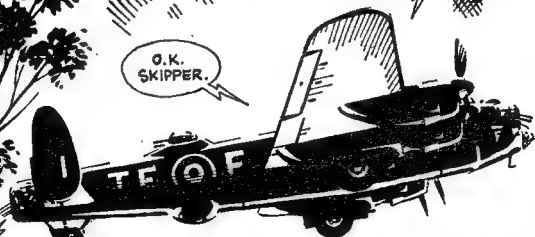
AS THE CURTAINS CLOSED FOR EVER ON HIS CAREER AS A PILOT, LUCAS ONLY REGRETTED THE WASTED TIME. HIS DESTINY WAS IN A LONELY TURRET IN A FLAMING SKY... A COOL EXPERT IN A TEAM OF EXPERTS.

WHEELS UP, FLAP 20, CRUISING REVS AND BOOST, ENGINEER. TURNING PORTON TO ZERO NINE SEVEN, NAVIGATOR, LEVEL AT 300 FEET. WE OUGHT TO GET 230 KNOTS WITH THIS LIGHT LOAD. YOU O.K. REAR-GUNNER?

RIGHT SKIPPER.

O.K. SKIPPER.

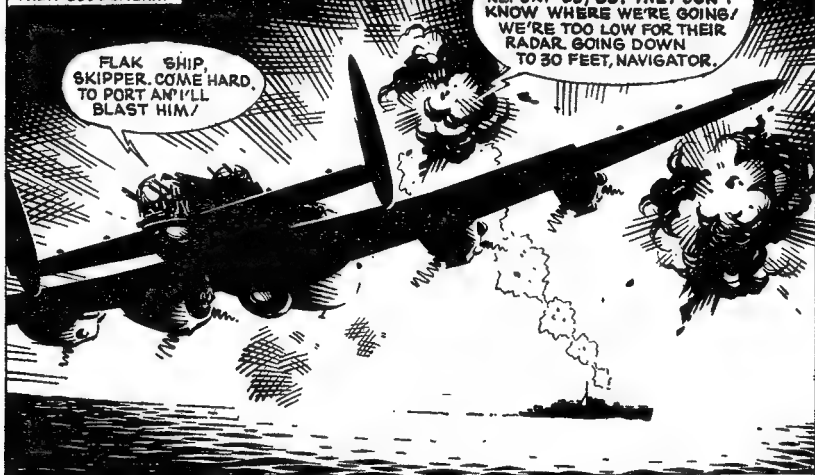
FINE, SKIPPER, THANKS!



THEY ROARED EAST, LOW OVER THE SEA AS THE NIGHT CLOSED IN ON THEM. MIKE REACHED EACH RADAR CHECK POINT WITH UNCANNY ACCURACY. THEN SUDDENLY...

FLAK SHIP,  
SKIPPER, COME HARD  
TO PORT AN' I'LL  
BLAST HIM!

DON'T SHOOT,  
REAR-GUNNER. THEY'LL  
REPORT US, BUT THEY DON'T  
KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING!  
WE'RE TOO LOW FOR THEIR  
RADAR. GOING DOWN  
TO 30 FEET, NAVIGATOR.



MIKE WAS RIGHT. AS THE LANCASTER SWEEPED AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS, THE TELEGRAPHIST ON BOARD THE GERMAN GUN BOAT WAS CRACKLING A MESSAGE TO HIS OPERATIONAL H.Q. 80 MILES TO THE SOUTH.

—AND MAKE THAT  
SIGNAL TOP PRIORITY,  
YEOMAN/ THEY WILL ALERT  
ALL STATIONS IN  
THE AREA.

I HAVE NEVER  
SEEN AN ENGLANDER  
BOMBER FLYING SO LOW  
OR SO FAST. I WONDER  
WHAT HE IS AFTER.....



THREE MINUTES LATER, A WHOLE SQUADRON OF THE LATEST FOCKE WULF 190'S ROARED INTO THE WAITING NIGHT.

ACHTUNG, ALL BLITZBADEN STAFFEL PROCEED TO KILLING AREA ZERO NINE AT 2000 METRES. ONE ENGLANDER HEAVY BOMBER REPORTED APPROACHING FROM NORTH AT 350 KILOMETRES, LOW LEVEL. STAND BY FOR VECTOR.

HIMMEL! HE IS HEADING FOR ZONE X, BUT WE WILL BLAST HIM INTO THE SEA. HEIL HITLER!

AS THE ENEMY COASTLINE FLASHED BY, MIKE EASED THE THROTTLES FORWARD AND LIFTED THE REV LEVERS TILL THE FOUR MERLINS WERE THRUSTING THE GREAT MACHINE FORWARD AT MAXIMUM CRUISING SPEED.

CAMERA CHECKED, SKIPPER. KEEP HER AT 1500 FEET ON THE RUN IN IF YOU CAN. OTHERWISE I'LL HAVE TO RESET THE PHOTO FLASH.

ROGER, BOMB AIMER. TURNING NOW ONTO ZERO NINE ZERO, NAV, AND CLIMBING. WE MAY HAVE BEATEN THE DEFENCES TO IT. KEEP YOUR EYES SKINNED, GUNNERS!

MIKE HAD HARDLY SPOKEN WHEN THE WHOLE GROUND BENEATH THEM BLAZED INTO BLINDING LIGHT AT THE TOUCH OF A SINGLE SWITCH. THEY WERE COMED BY 40 SEARCHLIGHTS!

CRUIKEY,  
WE'RE ALL LIT  
UP!


GET BACK TO YOUR POSITION, BOMB AIMER. I WANT NO NATTERING ON THE INTERCOM. I'LL CLIMB AND DIVE TO FOX THE FLAK. TELL ME WHEN WE'RE THREE MILES FROM TARGET, NAW.

THE SUSPENSE WAS UNBEARABLE. EVERY GERMAN FOR MILES AROUND COULD SEE THEM. BUT THE ACK-ACK GUNNERS ON THE GROUND HAD SPECIAL ORDERS —

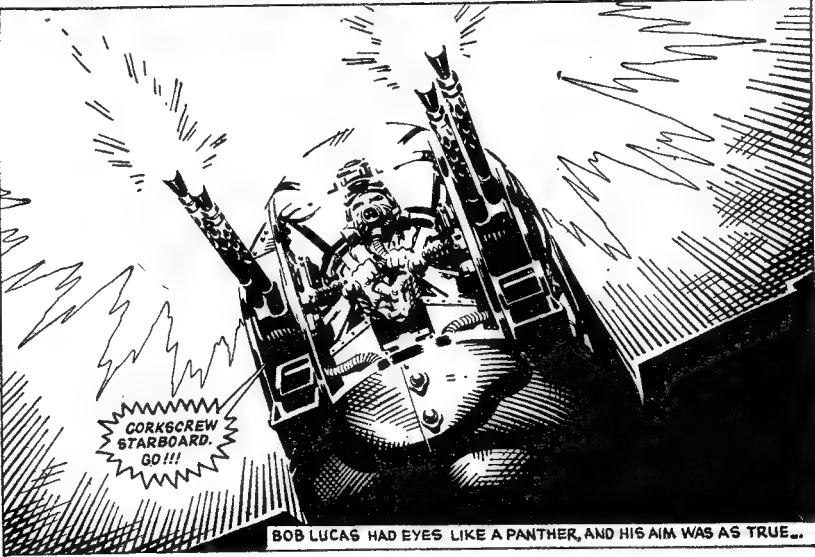
HERE IT COMES —  
A BEAUTIFUL TARGET.  
GOTT. WHY CAN'T WE  
OPEN UP?

IF YOU TOUCH THAT  
TRIGGER, CORPORAL, I'LL  
PUT A BULLET THROUGH YOUR  
BACK! THERE IS A GOOD REASON  
WE MUST HOLD OUR FIRE.

THERE WAS NO SIGN OF FLAK. ONLY THE DAZZLING SEARCHLIGHTS FILLED THE COCKPIT AND THE TURRETS WITH AN EERIE BLUISH' GLARE. LUCAS AND CHALKY, THE MID UPPER, WERE SWEATING; PANTING, PEERING THROUGH THE BLINDING SCREEN. THEN —



GLORY!! I HADN'T RECKONED ON THIS. MUST KEEP MY HEAD. I KNOW THEY'RE OUT THERE — SOMEWHERE. P'RAPS BOB CAN —



CORKSCREW STARBOARD. GO!!!

BOB LUCAS HAD EYES LIKE A PANTHER, AND HIS AIM WAS AS TRUE..



CONFIDENT OF THEIR SKILL AND SURPRISE, THE FIGHTERS HAD SWOOPED IN A PACK — TOO FAST! LUCAS SHATTERED THE LEADER IN THE FACE OF HIS SQUADRON.



IN THE LANCASTER THERE WAS SUPERB DISCIPLINE. ONLY CRISP ORDERS GOUNDED ON THEIR HEADPHONES. MIKE HAD SENT THE GREAT MACHINE INTO A SEERING DIVE.

RESUME LEVEL  
FLIGHT SKIPPER, THEY  
HAVE OVERSHOT US.

RESETTING  
PHOTOFLASH TO MINIMUM  
ALTITUDE, SKIPPER.

MOMENTS OF EXTREME DANGER WERE A TONIC.  
THEY WORKED WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED AND  
PRECISION. SMITHY, THE BOMB AIMER, WAS  
TAKING A SERIES OF RAPID SHOTS WITH THE  
HAND CAMERA.

TARGET SLIGHTLY  
LEFT. PORT THIRTY, SKIPPER!  
— AND HOLD IT THERE!

I SEE  
THE TARGET!



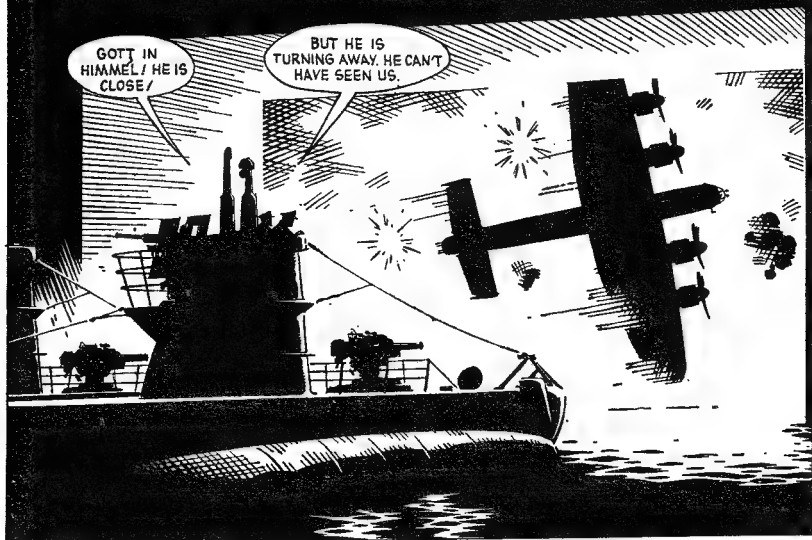
MIKE'S REACTIONS WERE RAZOR SHARP. HE WAS PLANNING AHEAD LIKE LIGHTNING.....

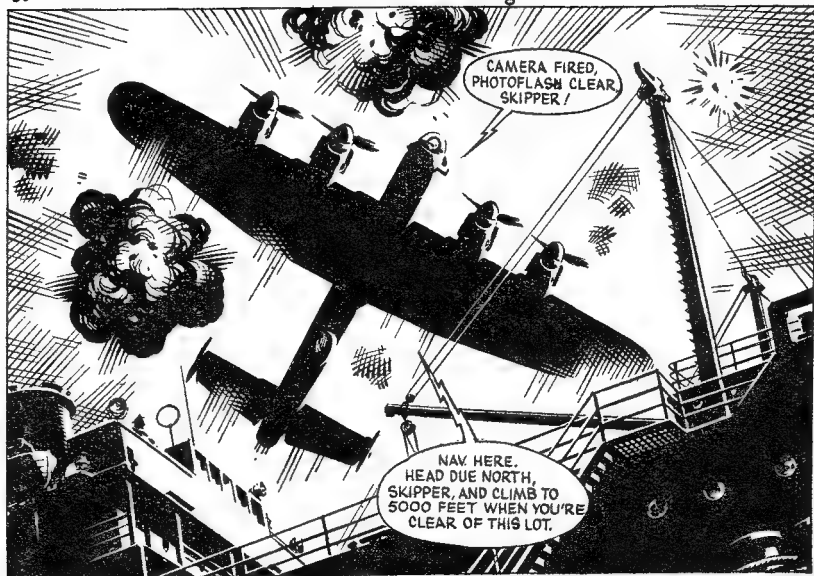
LIGHT FLAK'S A BIT THICK, BOMB AIMER. I'LL WEAVE FOR SAFETY AND ROLL OVER TO PORT AS WE FLY OPPOSITE THE SHELTER. GIVE ME THE TIMING!

THEIR TARGET WAS, INDEED, A VAST UNDERGROUND HARBOUR, BUILT BY SLAVE LABOUR TO SHELTER A WHOLE PACK OF BRAND NEW U BOATS. MIKE'S AIM WAS TO SEE RIGHT INSIDE WITH SMITHY'S CAMERA

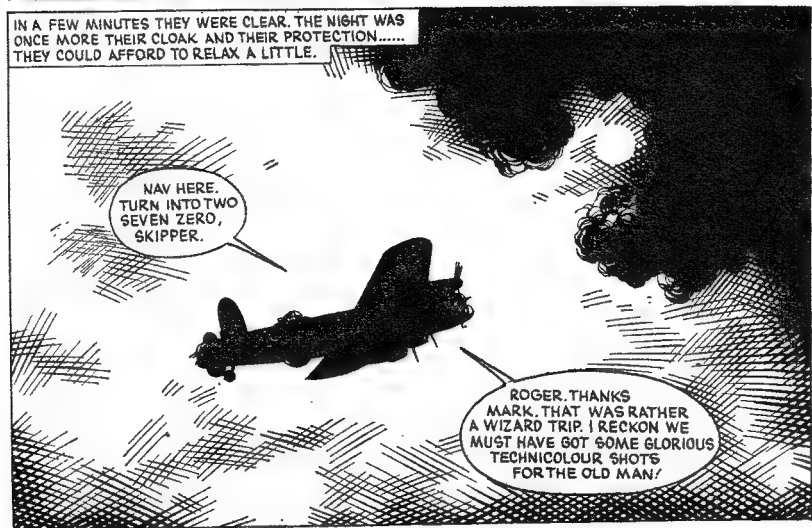
GOTT IN HIMMEL! HE IS CLOSE!

BUT HE IS TURNING AWAY. HE CAN'T HAVE SEEN US.





IN A FEW MINUTES THEY WERE CLEAR. THE NIGHT WAS  
ONCE MORE THEIR CLOAK AND THEIR PROTECTION.....  
THEY COULD AFFORD TO RELAX A LITTLE.



EVERYONE WAS CHEERFUL. IT WAS TIME FOR THE FLASKS OF COFFEE BEFORE THE LONG GRIND HOME AGAINST THE WIND.

THAT WAS PERFECT TIMING, SKIPPER. I COULD SEE RIGHT INSIDE, LIKE A GREAT CAVE IT WAS!

TALKING OF TIMING, SKIPPER. ASK LUCAS NOT TO LET THOSE NASTY GERMANS GET QUITE SO FLIPPIN' CLOSE. I WAS 'AVIN' A QUIET LOOK FROM THE ASTRO DOME AND I 'AD TO DUCK. VERY UNDIGNIFIED I THOUGHT!

LUCAS RESENTED WILLIAMS AND HIS JOKE. IT SOUNDED PATRONISING.

REAR-GUNNER HERE. I SUGGEST THE WIRELESS OPERATOR WILLIAMS MIGHT USE HIS EYES TO HELP LOOK FOR THOSE NASTY GERMANS. I'LL NOT GIVE HIM HIS MONEY BACK EVEN IF HE DIDN'T LIKE THE SHOW!

SORRY, LUCAS. NO OFFENCE, MATE! I'M BRINGING YOUR COFFEE NOW, MESELF. 'OW'S THAT FOR SERVICE, EH?

BUT WILLIAMS HAD COME  
TO ADMIRE BOB

GOOD SHOW,  
MATE! WE'RE LUCKY  
TO HAVE YOU WITH US!  
THE SKIPPER WAS DEAD  
RIGHT WHEN HE GRABBED  
YOU FOR THE CREW!  
CHEERS!

SUDDENLY WILLIAMS HAD  
CLEARED THE AIR — FOR  
GOOD. THE COFFEE  
WAS GOOD, TOO!

MIKE'S RECONNAISSANCE HAD BEEN  
TREMENDOUSLY SUCCESSFUL AND HARRY  
BERESFORD WAS DELIGHTED. THE A.O.C.  
HIMSELF CAME UP TO GRIMTHORPE TO  
SEE THEM OFF THE FOLLOWING EVENING.

EXCELLENT PHOTOGRAPHS,  
MORTIMER. YOU'VE GOT A HUNDRED  
PICKED CREWS WITH YOU TONIGHT, SO  
BE JUST AS ACCURATE WITH YOUR  
MARKERS. THEY'VE GOT THE NEW  
BLOCKBUSTER ON BOARD SO IT  
SHOULD BE QUITE A PARTY!

GOOD LUCK,  
BOB — AND BE  
CAREFUL!

AND AS THE MIGHTY LANCASTERS HEAVED THEMSELVES INTO THE AIR LIKE GIGANTIC EAGLES, LUCAS FOUND HIMSELF STRANGELY WITHOUT FEAR. — COULD IT BE HE WAS OVER-CONFIDENT?

BOY! WE'LL SORT THAT LOT OUT TONIGHT! I HOPE CHALKY REMEMBERS MY INSTRUCTIONS.



BUT MIKE KNEW JUST HOW THIN THEIR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL WERE. THIS TIME, HE WOULD HAVE TO CIRCLE THE TARGET AND DIRECT THE RAID. STEVE CRIPPS, THE ENGINEER, SENSED MIKE'S NERVES.

WE'RE GETTING A BIT TOO CLOSE TO THE ENEMY COAST TO STARBOARD NAVIGATOR. CHECK THAT FUEL, ENGINEER, WE'LL NEED EVERY DROP.



THE SKIPPER'S JUMPY TONIGHT. I CHECKED THOSE GAUGES ONLY A COUPLE OF MINUTES AGO.

THEY ATTACKED FROM A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT ANGLE THIS TIME. MIKE SCREAMED IN TOO FAST FOR THE DEFENCES. HIS RED MARKER BLAZED OUT 20 YARDS FROM THE SHELTER ENTRANCE.

THAT WAS  
A PIECE OF CAKE,  
SKIPPER.

CUT THE  
NATTERING, WIRELESS  
OP! I'M TURNING PORT TO  
ORBIT THE TARGET AND  
SWITCHING TO MASTER  
BOMBER FREQUENCY. -  
KEEP YOUR EYES  
SKINNED, EVERYONE!





AS MIKE WHEELED THE LANCASTER ROUND, HIS CALM VOICE CALLED IN THE FIRST WAVE OF THE MAIN FORCE OVER THE RADIO. HE KNEW THAT THE NEXT FEW MINUTES COULD SHORTEN THE WAR — PERHAPS.



THE BOMBING WAS SO ACCURATE THAT THE MARKER WAS EXTINGUISHED BY THE FIRST DOZEN CROWBAR AIRCRAFT. MIKE TURNED TO LAY A SECOND FLARE. HE WAS NOW HIMSELF A SITTING TARGET.....



AS CHALKY SANDERS SQUEEZED HIS TRIGGERS AND LUCAS' FURIOUS VOICE GRITTED THROUGH THE INTERCOM, CANNON-SHELLS RIPPED ALONG THE FUSELAGE.



LUCAS HAD FORGOTTEN THAT MIKE HAD TO FLY STRAIGHT!

MARKER GONE, SKIPPER. 30 YARD'S SHORT. TELL THE CROWBAR BOYS TO AIM OVER.

BANDIT BREAKING STARBOARD, SKIPPER. I THINK I HIT HIM. THERE'S A HECK OF A MESS HERE, CAN SOMEONE GO BACK TO LUCAS? HE'S BEEN HIT BADLY.

LUCAS' TURRET WAS A TWISTED, GAPING WRECK. DAGGERS OF SEARING PAIN SHOT THROUGH HIS RIGHT LEG. HIS MIKE WAS DEAD, BUT HE COULD STILL HEAR THE INTERCOM.

PLUTO CALLING CROWBAR AIRCRAFT. COME IN — COME IN/ AIM THE RED MARKER PLUS THREE. AIM PLUS THREE —

WHAT A STUPID FOOL I AM! ... GOOD OLD CHALKY — HE SAVED THE KITE ... SERVES ME RIGHT IF I BLEED OUT HERE. ... WHAT A ... FOOL!

LUCAS WAS SUFFERING AS MUCH FROM REMORSE AS FROM THE PAIN WHICH RACKED HIS WHOLE BODY. HE SAW THE BURNING ENGINE AS THE INTERCOM CRACKLED IN HIS EARS.

FEATHER THE  
PORT INNER ENGINE!  
WATCH THE BOMB  
BURSTS, BOMB  
AIMER.

BOMBS ARE  
SMACK ON THE TARGET,  
SKIPPER. IT'S  
INCREDIBLE!

BUT MIKE KNEW THAT HIS FIRST DUTY WAS TO OBLITERATE THE TARGET AND TO PHOTOGRAPH THE DAMAGE. ONCE MORE, HE FLUNG THE SHATTERED AIRCRAFT ROUND ACROSS THE BLAZING INFERNO.

MAKE IT A GOOD PICTURE,  
BOMB AIMER! THEY'LL WANT  
PROOF BACK HOME.



FOR A BRIEF SECOND, MIKE GASPED AS THE COLOSSAL MOUNTAIN OF RUBBLE AND THE FLAMING CAVERNS FLASHED UNDERNEATH THEM. THEN HIS STEADY VOICE CRACKLED OVER THE R.T. —  
MISSION COMPLETE!



PLUTO CALLING  
CROWBAR AIRCRAFT.  
GOOD SHOW! HOME, JAMES,  
HOME, JAMES! PLUTO  
SWITCHING OFF. OUT!

U 710

MEANWHILE, WILLIAMS STRUGGLED BACK THROUGH THE TORN FUSELAGE CLUTCHING THE FIRST AID KIT AND HAD REACHED THE SHATTERED REAR TURRET. LUCAS WAS TERRIBLY MANGLED, BUT STILL ALIVE. WILLIAMS PLUGGED INTO THE SPARE INTERCOM SOCKET.....

WIRELESS OP  
HERE, SKIPPER, LUCAS'  
O.K. BIT OF A SMASH 'E'S 'AD.  
THOUGH, DOUBT IF WE'LL SEE  
'IM ON THE ROAD FOR A  
BIT. CAN I USE THE  
MORPHIA?

SKIPPER  
HERE. YES, OF  
COURSE, I'LL SEND  
SMITHY DOWN IN A  
MOMENT. WE MAY  
WANT YOU BACK  
HERE.

WILLIAMS FIRST FORCED A TOURNEQUET ROUND LUCAS' EXPOSED THIGH. SUDDENLY, BOB REALISED JUST HOW THANKFUL HE WAS TO ALL THE OTHERS. NO LONGER WAS HE THE ACE GUNNER —

SORRY, OLD SON /  
'AD TO SHIFT IT A BIT TO  
GET THIS ON. YOU'D NEVER 'AV  
THOUGHT I WAS IN THE BOY  
SCOUTS ONCE, WOULD YOU?!

LUCAS WAS A HELPLESS PASSENGER. — A PIECE OF BAGGAGE TO BE PLUGGED WITH MORPHIA. THIS WONDERFUL MAN, WILLIAMS, WAS SAVING HIS LIFE.



COME ON, CHUM! SHOW US YOUR VACCINATION MARKS! LET'S GET THIS MORPHIA PUMPED INTO YOU. JUST WOT THE DOCTOR ORDERED!

MEANWHILE THE OTHER PORT ENGINE HAD PACKED UP FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS MIKE STRAINED EVERY NERVE TO KEEP HER FLYING STRAIGHT. HIS LEFT LEG WAS SEIZED WITH CRAMP, LOCKED AGAINST THE LEFT RUDDER PEDAL.



MIKE HERE, MARK. GIVE ME A COURSE FOR THE NEAREST POINT ON THE ENGLISH COAST. STARBOARD ENGINES ARE AT FULL BORE, THEY MAY NOT LAST.

O.K. SKIPPER. ABOUT 70 MILES TO GO. EASE HER ROUND 20 DEGREES TO STARBOARD.

WILLIAMS WAS BACK AT HIS SET NOW. AT ONCE THE "DARKIE" EMERGENCY STATIONS ON THE EAST COAST SWUNG INTO FEVERISH ACTIVITY. AIR/SEA RESCUE WERE STANDING BY.





MIKE PUT THE SHATTERED BOMBER DOWN IN A COMPARATIVELY CALM SEA. SHE PLOUGHED A HUGE WAKE THROUGH THE SLIGHT SWELL, LURCHED FORWARD AND DRIFTED TO A STANDSTILL, STRAIGHT AND LEVEL. IT WAS A PERFECT DITCHING.



VERY SOON THE LAUNCH WAS ALONGSIDE AND STRONG ARMS LIFTED LUCAS, HALF CONSCIOUS, DOWN INTO THE CABIN.



## Death Takes Wing

TEN DAYS LATER, WHEN THE FIRST AGONY HAD SUBSIDED, LUCAS WAS ALLOWED SOME VISITORS TO HIS BEDSIDE. THE WHOLE CREW HAD BEEN DECORATED FOR GALLANTRY, AND MIKE WAS WEARING HIS BRAND NEW D.S.O.

COR, YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE THERE, MATE; SKIPPER SCARED THE LIVIN' DAYLIGHTS OUT O'ME DOWN THE NEWMARKET ROAD IN THAT FLAMIN' CAR OF HIS!

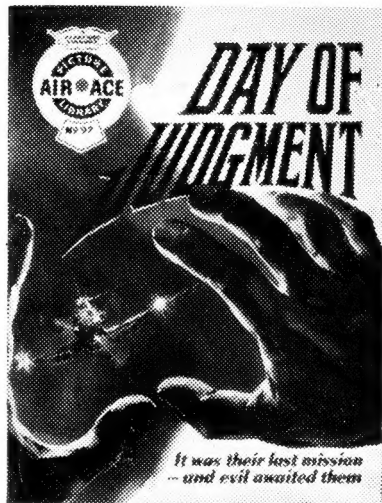
DOC SAYS I'LL BE UP IN A MONTH. BETTER WRITE TO YOUR OLD SCOUTMASTER, WILLIAMS. TELL HIM YOU'VE DONE YOUR GOOD DEED, CHUM!

DESPITE THE AMPUTATION OF HIS LEG, LUCAS KNEW HE WAS LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. WAR IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS AND MANY GOOD MEN HAD ALREADY DIED... BUT SUCH AN EXPERIENCE AS THE LAST TRIP HAD SHOWN HIM DEPTHS OF FRIENDSHIP AND PERFECT TEAMWORK IN THE FACE OF A COMMON FOE...

— RECKON I'M LUCKY TO BE ALIVE — ALL OF US ARE.

YES, BUT, YOU SEE, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LUCKY IN MY CREW. THEY PUT ME IN ANY PLACE AND KEPT ME THERE. AND YOU STARTED IT ALL — REMEMBER?

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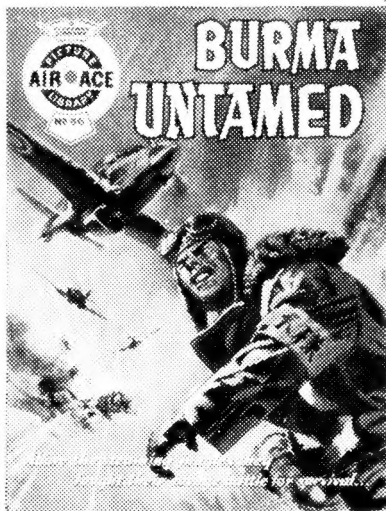


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